SWORD ART ONLINE
ソードアート・オンライン
プログレッシブ・アリシゼーション
PROJECT ALICIZATION
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Original Creator & Illustration Ref
Character Design & Art

Previously on SAO:

Previously on S:A:O: Hal chose to protect the power of the omniscient Kayaba Kirito and Eugeo wandered as Alicia stolen away. But just then, Kirito's soul was returned to him. He awakened to find himself lying in a bed—everything that had happened before had only existed inside a virtual world—

Where do you think the human mind is?

IN WHAT PART OF THE HUMAN MIND, ALONG WITH THE AREA WHERE THAT MIND RESIDES, THESE ARE THE TWO KEY QUESTIONS OF THE ALICIZATION ARC—

Inside the head... Inside the brain, correct?

Then, which part of the brain cell contains your mind?

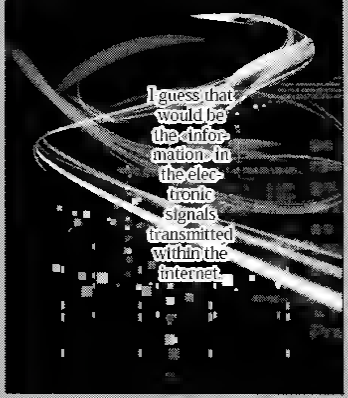
Yes... that is quite close to the correct answer, but you could also call the smartphones we use, as well as any individual computer, the Internet.

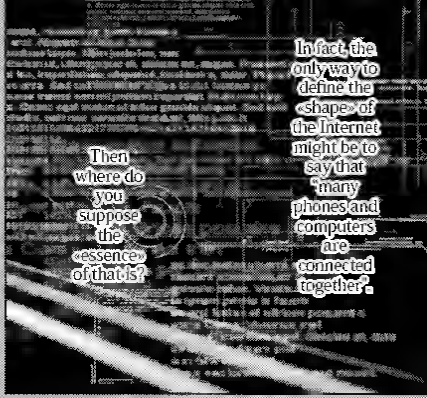
In the end, you might even call those terminals the Internet.

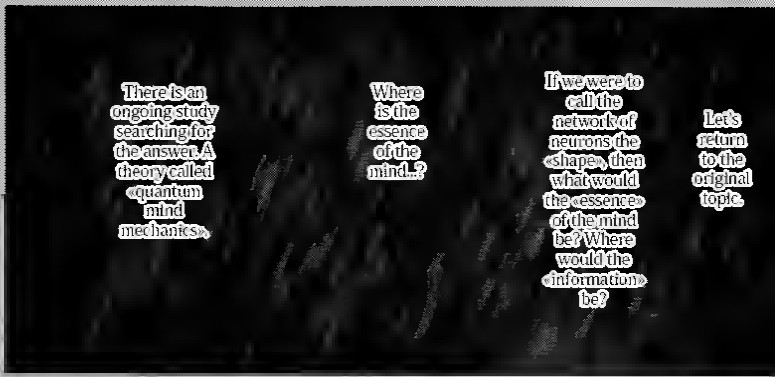
So... what does the human mind have to do with the Internet?

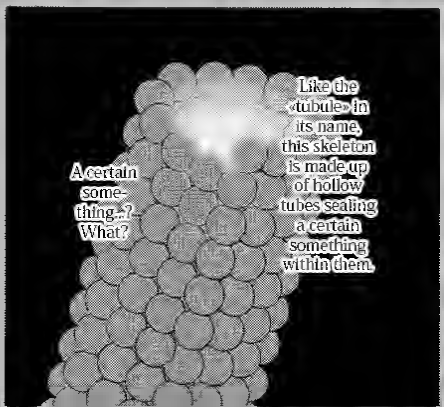
Isn't it the network of all those neurons tied together that makes up the mind?

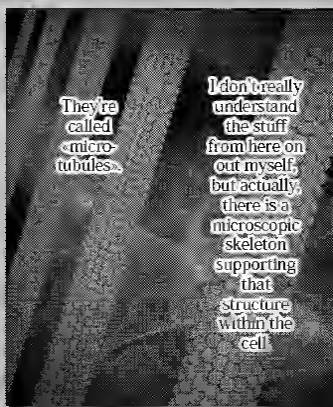
It's like if you asked someone what the Internet is—you can't explain the answer if you only focus on individual computers.

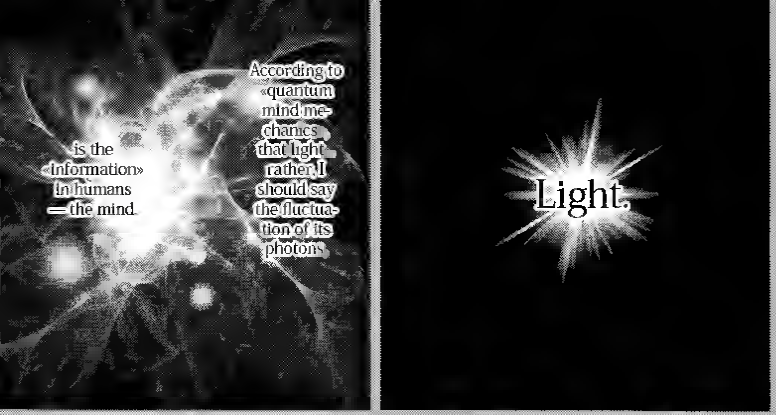

I guess that would be the «information» in the electronic signals transmitted within the internet.


Then where do you suppose the «essence» of that is?
In fact, the only way to define the «shape» of the Internet might be to say that many phones and computers are connected together.

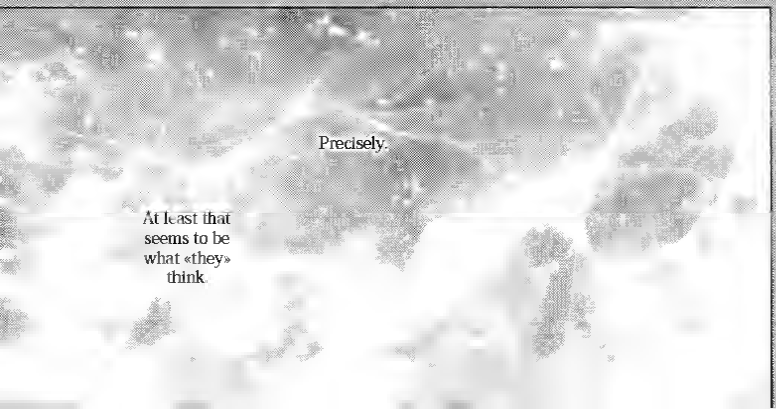

There is an ongoing study searching for the answer. A theory called «quantum mind mechanics».
Where is the essence of the mind...?
If we were to call the network of neurons the «shape», then what would the «essence» of the mind be? Where would the «information» be?
Let's return to the original topic.


A certain something...? What?
Like the «tubule» in its name, this skeleton is made up of hollow tubes sealing a certain something within them.


They're called «microtubules».
I don't really understand the stuff from here on out myself, but actually, there is a microscopic skeleton supporting that structure within the cell.


is the «information» in humans — the mind.
According to «quantum mind mechanics» that light rather, I should say the fluctuation of its photons
Light.

The aggregate of that light is the human soul?
The human mind is... the fluctuation of light...?

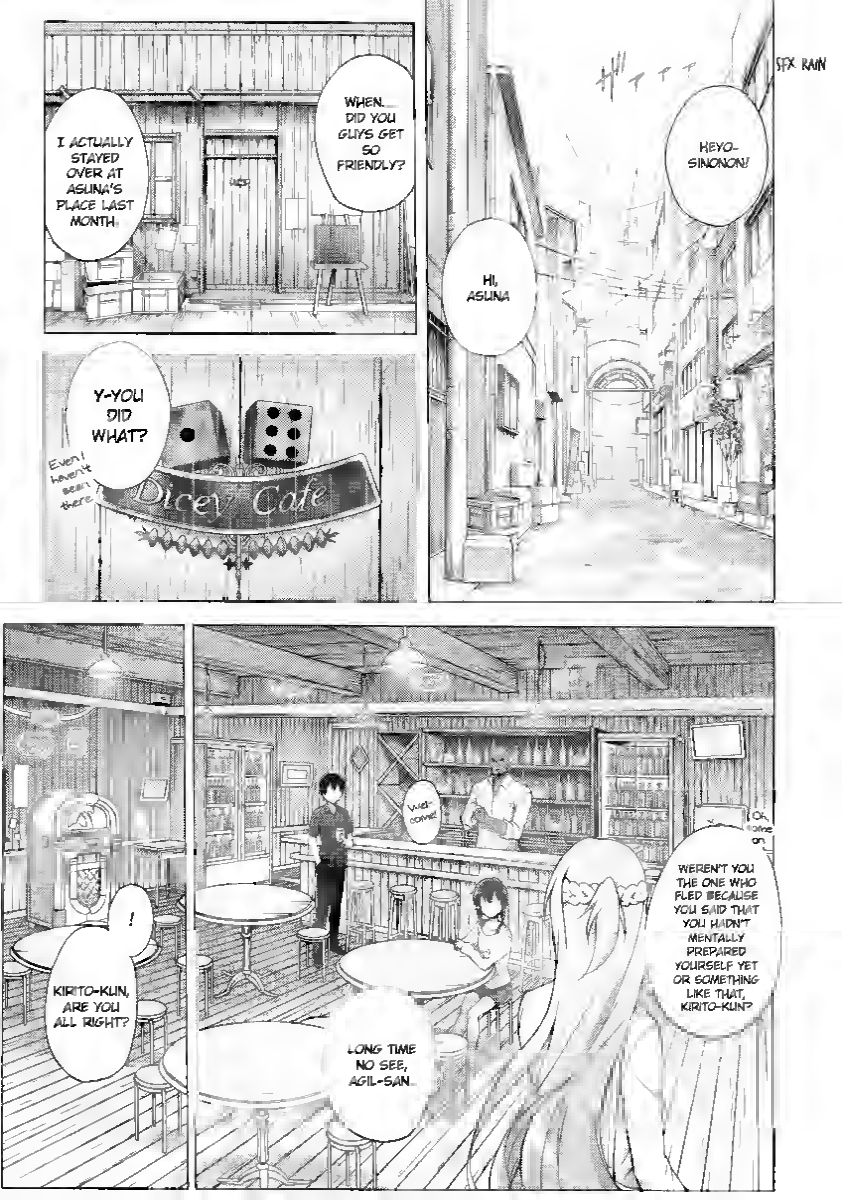

Precisely.
At least that seems to be what «they» think.

The aggregate of all that light;

The thing that may or may not be the human soul, «they've» given it a name.

«Fluct-light».

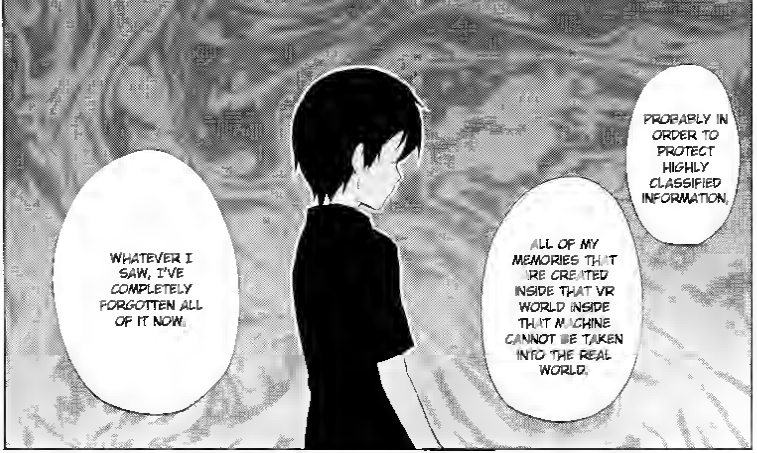
Fluctuating light, «Fluctuating Light», or simply—

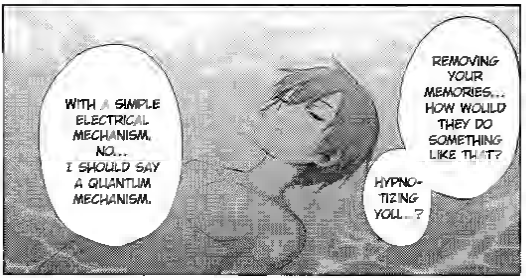

I ACTUALLY STAYED OVER AT ASUNA'S PLACE LAST MONTH.
WHEN... DID YOU GUYS GET SO FRIENDLY?
SFX: RAIN
HEYO-SINONON!
HI, ASUNA
Y-YOU DID WHAT?
Even I haven't been there
Dicey Cafe
KIRITO-KUN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
!
WELCOME
LONG TIME NO SEE, AGIL-SAN.
WEREN'T YOU THE ONE WHO FLED BECAUSE YOU SAID THAT YOU HADN'T MENTALLY PREPARED YOURSELF YET OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, KIRITO-KUN?
OH, SOME OF

HAVE YOU GOTTEN THINNER?
Yeah.
PROBABLY BECAUSE I'VE SLEPT FOR THE PAST 3 DAYS,
WITHOUT EATING OR DRINKING.
Though I was nourished through an IV.
HUH? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
DID YOU TAKE UP SOME DANGEROUS JOB AGAIN?
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
HOLD ON A SEC, LET ME CHECK
CHECK?

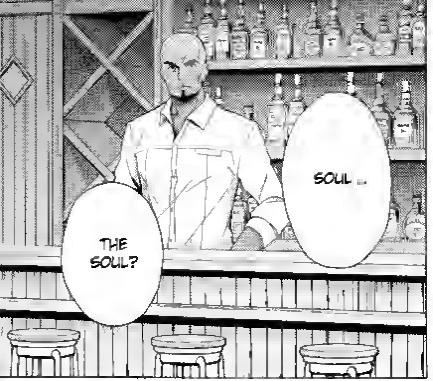
A... BIOSENSOR FOR KIRITO?
Huh? I-I'm sorry
THEY IMPLANTED A REALLY TINY SENSOR HERE, UNDERNEATH MY SKIN.
PULSE 63, TEMPERATURE 36.2.
kirito
63 36.2
YEAH... SEEMS FINE
N-NO, OF COURSE NOT!
AH, COULD IT BE AN ANTI-CHEATING SYSTEM?
AND SHE ALSO TRACKS YOUR LOCATION AND GPS COORDINATES USING THAT?
WHY...?
THIS THING MONITORS MY DATA AND SENDS INFORMATION TO ASUNA'S PHONE IN NEAR-REAL TIME.
DOES IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH A NEW VRMMO ALPHA TEST OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
WHAT A SHADY JOB
THEY SAID THAT HAVING TO STICK ELECTRODES ON ME EACH TIME WOULD BE VERY TROUBLE-SOME
THE PLACE WHERE I WORK RECOM-MENDED IMPLANTING IT.
SPX CLINK
I don't want them because all the data there belongs to them selves...
AND THEN I SAID, "IF THAT'S KIRITO-KUN'S DATA, I'D LIKE A COPY AS WELL."

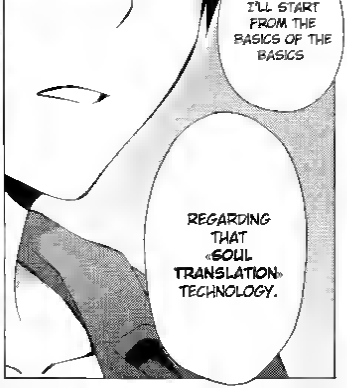
RATH.
DEVEL-OPED BY...
I'M TESTING THE BRAIN-MACHINE INTERFACE FOR A COMPLETELY NEW FULLDIVE SYSTEM.
!
IT'S A CREATURE THAT SOME SAY LOOKS LIKE A PIG, AND OTHERS SAY LOOKS LIKE A TURTLE.
IT'S IN "THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS, AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE."
IT'S THE NAME OF A FICTIONAL CREATURE
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THAT COMPANY.
WHAT DOES THAT WORD EVEN MEAN...?
HUH?
I'M NOT SURE.
Hmm...
ABOUT THAT,
I SEE. SO,
WHAT'S THE FULLDIVE WORLD LIKE?


PROBABLY IN ORDER TO PROTECT HIGHLY CLASSIFIED INFORMATION.
ALL OF MY MEMORIES THAT ARE CREATED INSIDE THAT VR WORLD INSIDE THAT MACHINE CANNOT BE TAKEN INTO THE REAL WORLD.
WHATEVER I SAW, I'VE COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ALL OF IT NOW.


REMOVING YOUR MEMORIES... HOW WOULD THEY DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
HYPNO-TIZING YOU...?
WITH A SIMPLE ELECTRICAL MECHANISM. NO... I SHOULD SAY A QUANTUM MECHANISM.

WH... WHAT?!


SOUL...
THE SOUL?


I'LL START FROM THE BASICS OF THE BASICS
REGARDING THAT «SOUL TRANSLATION» TECHNOLOGY.

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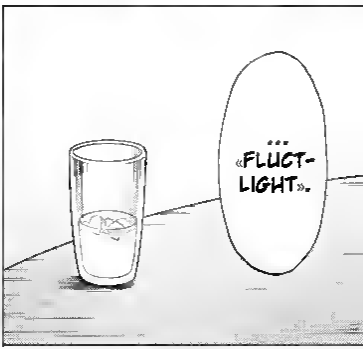
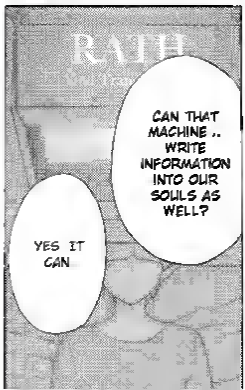
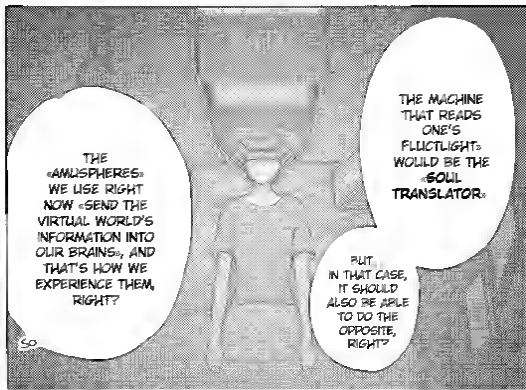
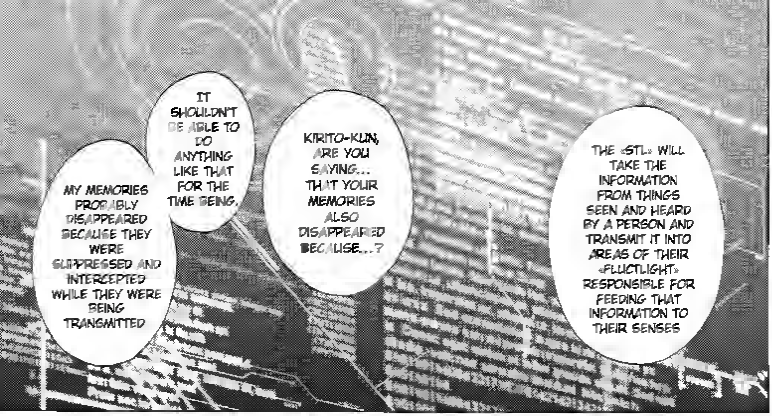

...
«FLUCT-LIGHT».


RATH
CAN THAT MACHINE .. WRITE INFORMATION INTO OUR SOULS AS WELL?
YES IT CAN


THE «AMUSPHERES» WE USE RIGHT NOW «SEND THE VIRTUAL WORLD'S INFORMATION INTO OUR BRAINS», AND THAT'S HOW WE EXPERIENCE THEM, RIGHT?
THE MACHINE THAT READS ONE'S FLUCTLIGHT WOULD BE THE «SOUL TRANSLATOR».
BUT IN THAT CASE, IT SHOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO DO THE OPPOSITE, RIGHT?


THE «STL» WILL TAKE THE INFORMATION FROM THINGS SEEN AND HEARD BY A PERSON AND TRANSMIT IT INTO AREAS OF THEIR «FLUCTLIGHT» RESPONSIBLE FOR FEEDING THAT INFORMATION TO THEIR SENSES
KIRITO-KUN, ARE YOU SAYING... THAT YOUR MEMORIES ALSO DISAPPEARED BECAUSE...?
IT SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT FOR THE TIME BEING.
MY MEMORIES PROBABLY DISAPPEARED BECAUSE THEY WERE SUPPRESSED AND INTERCEPTED WHILE THEY WERE BEING TRANSMITTED

... I'LL ADMIT THAT I CAN NEVER FEEL SAFE AROUND THAT GUY.
I STILL CAN'T FIGURE OUT HIS TRUE IDENTITY OR OCCUPATION.
BUT YOU SEE...

BUT... I'M SCARED I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING BAD IS GOING TO HAPPEN AGAIN...
THIS WAS ANOTHER OF KIKUOKA -SAN'S IDEAS, WASN'T IT? FROM THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS?

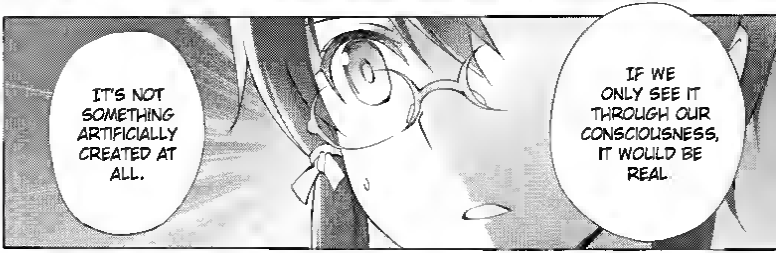
I HAVE A FEELING THAT THE «STL» WON'T STOP AT BEING JUST AN ENTERTAINMENT DEVICE...

I... WANT TO KNOW.
WHERE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FULLDIVE TECHNOLOGY IS HEADING NOW.

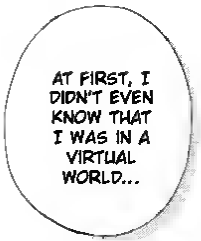
SINON, THIS GLASS IS REAL, RIGHT?
YES, IT IS.
BUT THE «STL» CAN DO THE SAME THINGS THAT THE AMUSPHERE CAN, RIGHT?
WHY IS THIS SUCH A BIG DEAL, THEN.
WELL. OKAY.
LISTEN. WHILE THIS GLASS IS INSIDE MY HAND,
IT IS ALSO INSIDE YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS, SINON. TO EXPLAIN IT LIKE RATH DOES, IT IS ALSO INSIDE SINON'S «FLUCTLIGHT»
TO BE PRECISE, THE LIGHT REFLECTING OFF THE GLASS HITS THE RETINA AND IS CONVERTED INTO ELECTRICAL SIGNALS, THEN MATERIALIZES INSIDE YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS
SFX: BLOCKING
THEN.

THAT IS, WHENEVER WE SEE SOMETHING,
WE STORE ITS DATA INSIDE OUR «FLUCTLIGHTS» IN SUCH A WAY THAT CAN BE RECORDED AND REPRODUCED LATER ON.
HOW ABOUT NOW? DID THE GLASS IN YOUR MIND DISAPPEAR INSTANTLY AS WELL, SINON?
NO MATTER WHAT, I WOULDN'T BE THAT FORGETFUL
EXACTLY.
EVEN IF YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES, IT WON'T INSTANTLY VANISH.
IN OTHER WORDS,
IF WE INPUT A PERFECT COPY OF THE DATA PRODUCED WHEN YOU SEE THE GLASS,
YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO "SEE" A GLASS THAT DOESN'T ACTUALLY EXIST WITH THE SAME DEGREE OF REALISM.
THAT MAKES SENSE IN THEORY,
BUT REPRODUCING MEMORIES BY CONTROLLING THEM FROM THE OUTSIDE
!

IT'S JUST LIKE THE AMUSPHERE MAKING ITS USER SEE POLYGONAL DATA INSIDE THEIR HEAD
THE «STL» WRITES SHORT-TERM MEMORIES INTO ITS USER'S CONSCIOUSNESS.
IN OTHER WORDS, THAT «VIRTUAL WORLD»...

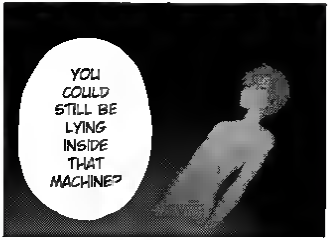

IF WE ONLY SEE IT THROUGH OUR CONSCIOUSNESS, IT WOULD BE REAL
IT'S NOT SOMETHING ARTIFICIALLY CREATED AT ALL.

MNEMONIC VISUAL DATA.
I DO REMEMBER HOW MY VERY FIRST DIVE WAS, BUT...
IT WAS DIFFERENT IT WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM ANY VR WORLD UP UNTIL NOW.

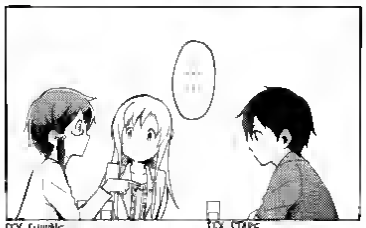

AT FIRST, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT I WAS IN A VIRTUAL WORLD...

AND, YOU'RE BEING INJECTED WITH
MEMORIES OF ME AND ASUNA?

...YOU MEAN,


YOU COULD STILL BE LYING INSIDE THAT MACHINE?

IF THAT WERE TRUE, THEN YOU SHOULD REMEMBER OUR PROMISE FROM YESTERDAY.
I'M... I'M JUST KIDDING
Y-YOU... PROMISE?


...
SFX SHUUNE
SFX STARE

AH, BUT YOU CAN'T SAY THAT I'M FAKE BECAUSE OF THAT, EITHER!?
I DIDN'T PROMISE ANYTHING LIKE THAT!
Right Asuna!

IN RETURN FOR TODAY'S STORY, YOU PROMISED TO TREAT ME TO AS MANY ♡DICEY CHEESECAKES♡ AS I WANTED.
WH... WHAAAAT?!
The most offensive nickname?!

SINONON... DID YOU FORGET?

ARE MY MEMORIES BEING MODIFIED ...?
AM... AM I ACTUALLY IN A VIRTUAL WORLD RIGHT NOW...?
PFF!
AH HA HA HA HA!
THAT YOU PROMISED TO TREAT ME TO AS MANY «BERRY & CHERRY TARTS» AS I WANTED...
WHAA AT?!
HA HA HA!
HEH HEH HEH!
SORRY, SORRY,
he he
FORGIVE ME, SINONON!
YOU... YOU GUYS TRICKED ME!
I'll kill you guys with Lightning Bolt Cubes in ALO!
YUP
LET ME TELL YOU GUYS ANOTHER ONE OF THE «STL'S» TRICKS.
CREATING A REAL «DREAM»... HUH.
WELL, IT IS A BIZARRE TECHNOLOGY, BUT SIMPLY PUT, IT REALLY IS JUST DREAMING A DREAM THAT FEELS REAL.

HOW LONG DO YOU GUYS THINK YOU SPENT IN THOSE DREAMS?
PROBABLY TWO TO THREE HOURS.
BUT, EVEN IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU DREAMT A VERY LONG DREAM, IF WE MONITOR YOUR BRAINWAVES,
DO YOU EVER HAVE THOSE DREAMS THAT FEEL REALLY, REALLY LONG?
FOR EXAMPLE, NIGHTMARES FROM WHICH YOU'D WAKE UP FEELING UNUSUALLY EXHAUSTED
AH—, YEAH, YEAH.
THERE ARE ALSO THOSE DREAMS THAT FEEL REALLY DIFFICULT TO WAKE UP FROM.
IT WAS ONLY A FEW MINUTES BEFORE YOU WOKE UP, IN REALITY.
IN THE REAL WORLD, YOUR ADRENALINE WILL SPIKE AND THE FLOW OF TIME WILL SLOW DURING DANGEROUS SITUATIONS
ON THE OTHER HAND, WHEN YOU RELAX AND IMMERSE YOURSELF IN CONVERSATION, YOU'LL FEEL THAT TIME FLIES BY.
RATH
Soul Translator #5
RATH DREW UP A THEORY WITH REGARDS TO THIS TYPE OF AWARENESS IN HUMANS.
IT SEEMS THAT THERE IS A PULSE FLOWING AT THE CENTER OF YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS, RESEMBLING A «THOUGHT CLOCK MANAGEMENT SIGNAL»...

CLOCK...?
LIKE HOW THE CPU OF A COMPUTER RUNNING AT A CERTAIN NUMBER OF GIGAHERTZ?
THAT'S REFERRING TO THE NUMBER OF CALCULATIONS IT MAKES IN A SECOND, RIGHT?
THAT VALUE REALLY ISN'T FIXED, EITHER.
(FX: TAP TAP TAP
NORMALLY IT OPERATES AT A SLOW PACE TO PREVENT OVERHEATING. IF WE COMMAND IT TO START PROCESSING HEAVILY—
FORCIBLY DRIVING THE MOVEMENT CLOCK, INCREASING THE SPEED OF THE CALCULATIONS.
WHEN THAT THOUGHT CLOCK IS ACCELERATED, HUMANS WILL FEEL THE FLOW OF TIME SLOW DOWN ACCORDINGLY.
IN OTHER WORDS, IN THE SHORT SPAN OF A FEW MINUTES, YOU ARE ABLE TO HAVE A DREAM THAT FEELS SEVERAL HOURS LONG.
HMMM
—THAT'S HOW IT IS.
DOESN'T THAT SOUND AMAZING?

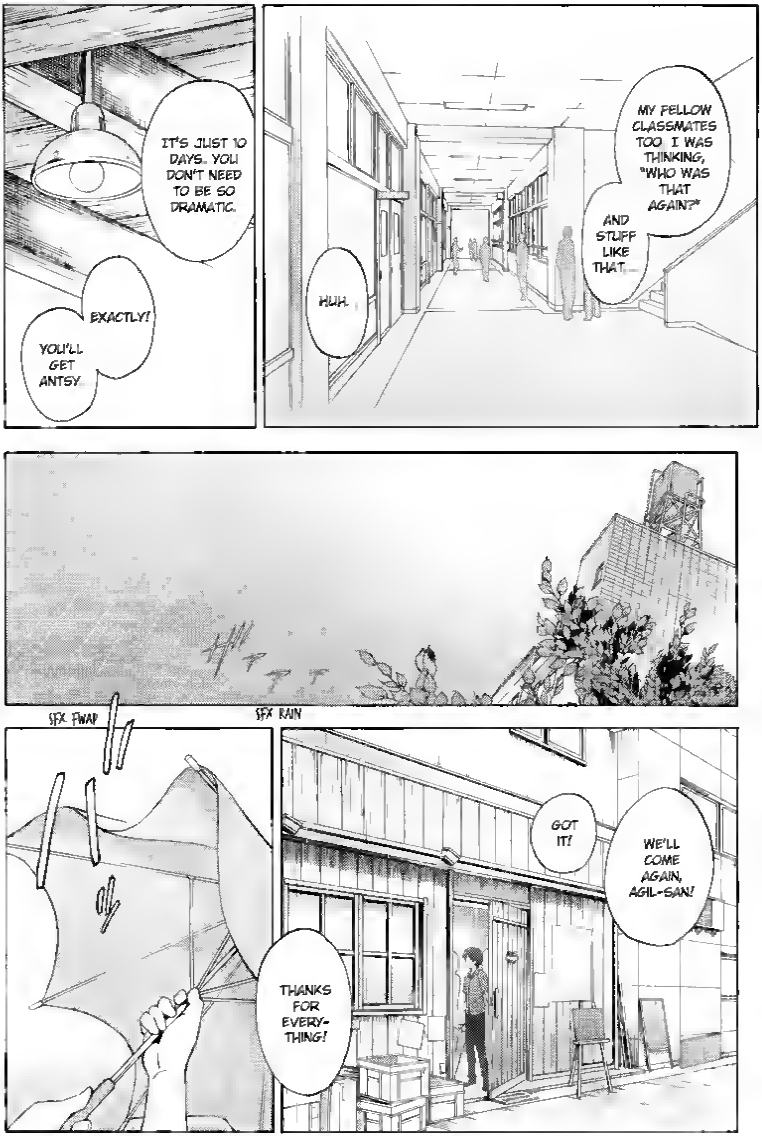
HOW ABOUT WORKING OR DOING HOMEWORK IN YOUR DREAMS?
TH-THAT'S CRAZY.
YEAH—, HOW WOULD YOU HAVE SUCH A CONVENIENT DREAM.
WHAT COULD BE JUST A FEW MINUTES IN THE REAL WORLD WOULD BE SEVERAL HOURS IN YOUR DREAM
REAL DREAMS ARE CHAOTIC AND INCOHERENT BECAUSE THEY'RE BYPRODUCTS OF MEMORY PROCESSING.
A DREAM CREATED BY THE «STL» IS A PERSISTENT, VERY CLEAR VR WORLD.
IN THERE, IT INTERFERES WITH THE PRESET PULSE SPEED DETERMINED BY THE THOUGHT CLOCK INSIDE YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS AND ACCELERATES IT. AT THE SAME TIME, IT CAN ALSO ACCELERATE THE SPEED OF TIME INSIDE THE VIRTUAL WORLD.
AS A RESULT, THE USER CAN EXPERIENCE TIME IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD THAT IS SEVERAL TIMES FASTER THAN THEIR REAL WORLD DIVE TIME.
THIS IS THE HIGHLIGHT FEATURE OF THE «STL».
«FLUCTLIGHT ACCELERATION».

SOMEHOW, THIS IS ALREADY
LET ME THINK. WELL,
HOW LONG DID YOU SPEND INSIDE THE «STL» THESE PAST THREE DAYS?
I HEAR THAT THE FLA FUNCTION CAN CURRENTLY ACCELERATE BY UP TO 3 TIMES
SO 9 TO 10 DAYS
THIS TOPIC HAS ALREADY LEFT OUR SPHERE OF REALITY...
HMM. I WONDER JUST WHAT KIND OF WORLD YOU WENT TO AND WHAT YOU DID.
DUNNO. I WAS THE ONLY TESTER.
THE ONLY THING THEY TOLD ME WAS THE CODENAME OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD USED FOR THE TEST.
IT'S CALLED... «UNDERWORLD».
... THE WORLD UNDER THE GROUND?
WOULDN'T IT BE REALLY DARK?
I GUESS IT'S NOT THAT INTUITIVE

ALICE?
THE FIRST PRIVATELY PRINTED EDITION OF THE BOOK WAS CALLED *ALICE'S ADVENTURES UNDER GROUND*.
ORIGINALLY TITLED *ALICE'S ADVENTURES UNDER GROUND*.
I think that was it.
MAYBE. THE NAME WAS TAKEN FROM *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*.
LIKE RITH FROM JUST NOW.
REALLY? THAT'S NEWS TO ME. IF THAT'S TRUE, THEY SEEM LIKE A COMPANY WITH AN AIR FOR FAIRY TALES
THIS REMINDS ME, THAT STORY WAS DIVIDED IN TWO VOLUMES AND WAS ABOUT A LONG DREAM, RIGHT?
THEN, MAYBE KIRITO-KUN SAT DOWN FOR A TEA PARTY WITH A RABBIT AND PLAYED CHESS WITH A QUEEN WHILE HE WAS DIVING.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
HA HA HA

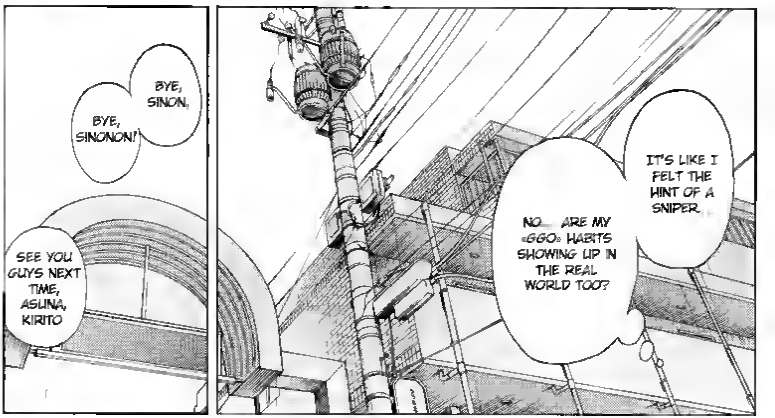
JUST NOW, WHEN I HEARD THAT NAME... ALICE,
... NOTHING ...
SOMEHOW, I FEEL LIKE I'M ABOUT TO REMEMBER SOMETHING...
I FEEL LIKE I'VE FORGOTTEN SOMETHING I REALLY HAVE TO DO RIGHT NOW...
I FEEL LIKE...
YOU MEAN, YOUR MEMORIES DURING THE EXPERIMENT...?

I SEE. IF THE MEMORIES STAY WITH YOU,
YOU'RE NOW A WEEK OR TWO MENTALLY OLDER THAN US...
BUT MY MEMORIES OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD WOULD BE DELETED
IT WAS TEN WHOLE DAYS OF MEMORIES AFTER ALL.
THERE'LL BE A FEW FRAGMENTS THAT WEREN'T COMPLETELY SEALED AWAY, WON'T THERE...
IT FEELS KIND OF... CREEPY.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, STARTING FROM YESTERDAY, I'VE BEEN FEELING SLIGHTLY UNEASY
I'M A BIT HAPPY, THOUGH
IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE CLOSER IN AGE NOW
AND THE SCHOOL. I FEEL THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN THEM IN A VERY, VERY LONG TIME
IT'S JUST THAT... THE STREETS AND TV PROGRAMS THAT I SHOULD BE SO VERY FAMILIAR WITH BY NOW,


IT'S JUST 10 DAYS. YOU DON'T NEED TO BE SO DRAMATIC.
EXACTLY! YOU'LL GET ANTSY.
HUH.
MY FELLOW CLASSMATES TOO. I WAS THINKING, "WHO WAS THAT AGAIN?"
AND STUFF LIKE THAT.
SFX: RAIN
SFX: FWAP
THANKS FOR EVERY-THING!
GOT IT!
WE'LL COME AGAIN, AGIL-SAN!

KIRITO-KUN, DON'T GO TO THOSE RIDICULOUS EXPERIMENTS ANYMORE
YEAH ALL THE EXPERIMENTS UNTIL NOW SEEMED TO BE REALLY SUCCESSFUL
I WON'T BE GETTING ANY MORE PART-TIME JOBS EITHER, SINCE FINAL EXAMS ARE COMING UP
UGH
Hey
DON'T REMIND ME OF THAT.
IN THAT CASE LET'S ORGANIZE A GROUP STUDY SESSION BEFORE THEN.
HEH HEH.
!!

WHAT'S WRONG, SINONON?
N-NAH IT'S NOTHING...
IT'S LIKE...


IT'S LIKE I FELT THE HINT OF A SNIPER...
NO... ARE MY «GGO» HABITS SHOWING UP IN THE REAL WORLD TOO?
BYE, SINON.
BYE, SINONON!
SEE YOU GUYS NEXT TIME, ASUNA, KIRITO

THE RAIN'S STOPPED
YEAH!

SFX RUSTLE
A SHADOW SHATTERING THE PEACE BETWEEN THE TWO—?!
DENGEKI BUNKO MAGAZINE
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CONTINUED IN

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